

a rather handsome woman: striking figure; golden blonde hair swept up into a dramatic bun; radiant, intoxicating smile which made her eyes glitter and squint like stars successfully peeping through a dawn's mist. there wasn't a time when i wasn't struck dumb by her beauty, and i'd often catch myself staring at her, and not always safely from a distance so that no one would notice me. at the age when i still played with my toy cars on the floor i would religiously do precisely that whenever mrs. pierre came for a visit. i'd position myself so that from where my cars were wheeling and spinning around i'd have a clear view of her very lengthy, shapely legs perhaps crossed in cheerful christmas conversation. truthfully, much of my wretched boyhood was spent spying on women. mrs. pierre might've been my favorite, but certainly there were many others. the thing about mrs. pierre was that she appeared to be so outrageously dazzling. i cannot conjure her up in my mind without seeing her in heels and nylons, finely tapered black dress and with soft pearl oval earrings. she wasn't like any of the other women in the neighborhood where i lived. she was an otherworldly creature who had been sent into my tiny realm in order to tempt me to abandon the notion and confines of boyhood as soon as i was able, and to me there was nothing disagreeable in this. i had looked upon that time, foolishly or not, as being a prison of unfair dimensions. it was forever just a matter of tapping patiently with some hard object, maybe a penknife, on its gray and suffocating walls, searching with the undying stubbornness of youth for that hollow point of vulnerability where i'd be able to break through. in this effort mrs. pierre was a godsend, a wealth of inspiration and my very special cheerleader. may her beauty be remembered during some of the darker moments on the road ahead.

THE MARCH SUN

the greatest pleasure these winter days
seems to come from simply standing in
the shower and allowing hot water
to rain down over me. and it is best
to allow the bathroom to get so
outrageously steamy that it's a real challenge
just locating the doorknob when
showering is done and i'm ready to step out

into the cold of the rest of the house.
yesterday i did what i've been doing
every so often recently: taking two
showers during the course of the day,
one in the morning and one when i come in
from my walk in the afternoon.
a bit excessive, sure, but the heat is so
comforting, especially on my neck,
which of late has been murderously
painful from simply sleeping the wrong way.
talking to my friend al, last night, he
disclosed to me that he has all but
given up attempting sleep on either side
of his body, so much pain is brought on
by doing so. and it struck me, when
he said this, that i cannot do much else
than sleep on my back too.
sleeping on my stomach: this has never
been an option for me. and
sleeping on either side causes pain
in my arms, hands and neck, which
is unfortunate since i like to
curl up in a fetal position
when i'm cold at night.
when haldora came back from morocco
i cannot tell you the level
of amazement i felt when my eyes fell
upon her tan. i could only
stare at it with mouth hanging
open, wondering at a sun which
could bring about such a
transformation. here
the sun crosses the sky shrouded
by clouds, usually undetected,
and when it is detected
it is largely ignored:
a god
without a people.

THE CLAY PIG AND REMEMBERED PRAYERS

i put the clay pig she brought me from morocco
up on the mantelpiece with the other pigs which
have come to me over the years. this new pig
is especially striking, so exquisitely crude
and bold is it. perhaps it is
because i was born in the year of the pig